

STATEMENT TO BE DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR  
MARINA VALERE, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
TO THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS),  
AT THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE ON  
SECURITY – MEXICO CITY, MEXICO:  
OCTOBER 27-28, 2003

Mr. Chairman,  
Heads of Delegation,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me to echo the sentiments expressed by those Delegations that preceded me in extending congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to preside over this Special Conference on Security. In so doing, I bring to you warm and friendly greetings from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, who, because of pressing and conflicting commitments is unable to be present at this Conference which marks a milestone in the security agenda of the Hemisphere.

I also wish to express my Delegation's sincere appreciation, through you, to the Government of Mexico, for the excellent arrangements made for our comfort and the smooth running of the Conference. The hospitality and graciousness too of the Mexican people have not gone unnoticed.

Mr. Chairman,

This Conference is taking place in fulfillment of the mandates of the Heads of State and Government at the II and III Summits of the Americas held in Santiago de Chile in 1998 and Quebec City in 2001 respectively. Member States, as a result have been called upon to analyze the implications of international security concepts in the hemisphere, to develop common approaches by which they would be addressed and to identify ways to revitalize and strengthen the institutions of the Inter-American System that deal with aspects of hemispheric security.

Trinidad and Tobago is indeed pleased that the Declaration that we will adopt at the end of this Conference expands the traditional security paradigm, and accords recognition to the

multi-dimensional approach to hemispheric security, an approach that was endorsed in the “Declaration of Bridgetown: The Multi-dimensional Approach to Hemispheric Security,” by the General Assembly at its 32<sup>nd</sup> regular session held in Barbados in June 2002. Trinidad and Tobago fully supports the view that, any meaningful definition of security can no longer be confined to traditional military operations. We believe that it would have been a fundamental error on our part to limit security concerns to any one area, while the scourge of HIV/AIDS pandemic, trafficking in illicit drugs and weapons, trans-national organized crime, environmental degradation and climate change, as well as poverty, continue to pose grave problems in our respective societies.

About six years ago, CARICOM Member States placed the topic of the special security concerns of small island states on the agenda of the OAS. During that time we sought to sensitize the wider membership to the peculiarities of our vulnerability. We also endeavoured to convince our colleague Member States that the new security dilemma, in which problems were essentially trans-national in nature, could not be solved by the unilateral

action of any one state, and strove to emphasize the point that, we all have a stake in safeguarding the security of the weakest among us.

For Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Chairman, like our neighbours in the English-speaking Caribbean, our historical evolution has essentially been based on the strengthening of civil and political rights. This is not meant to be an idle boast, for we are prepared to readily acknowledge that we need help in preserving our democracies and adherence to the rule of law, from the instabilities that derive from the sub-regional, regional and international environments. We are aware too, that the future of our democracy also lies in improving our capacity to participate in a free, fair and equitable trading system that provides enhanced trade opportunities, while at the same time attending to the needs of small economies.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is itself acutely aware of the vulnerability of its economy, of the fact that the prevalence of non-traditional security threats may jeopardize

hard-won development gains and increase levels of poverty among our people.

The trafficking in illegal drugs constitutes for us as a people, a major security matter because of its impact on criminal activity, arms trafficking, corruption, money laundering and within more recent times kidnapping. There is, as well, its potential for the infringement of our political integrity and stability. So too the scourge of HIV-AIDS.

It is well-known that prevalence rates of HIV-AIDS in the Caribbean are second only to those of sub-Saharan Africa, and that most of those diagnosed with the disease are in their prime productive years, the ages between 20 – 45 years. A fairly sizeable percentage of the cases are children, many of whom have lost either one or both parents to the disease. The cumulative direct and indirect costs of HIV/AIDS are staggering for small states such as Trinidad and Tobago, and the significant resources required to combat the disease, along with the decreased productivity of the affected workforce, are taking and

will continue, to exact a major toll on state institutions. Indeed, it has been estimated that in some countries, the deaths of one-fifth of young and middle-aged adults from HIV/AIDS could lead to social turmoil, economic disruption and even, political destabilization. In order to stem these developments, comprehensive and sustained policy responses are required.

The issue of environmental integrity, we deem to be one of a number of attributes that contributes to stability and hence long-term national security. Environmental degradation by contrast is a destabilizing factor that can undermine national, regional and perhaps even global security. Trinidad and Tobago is aware that the notion that environmental degradation and climate change can present a security threat is not accepted by all. Nevertheless, there exists documented cases where both trends have led to a scarcity of resources and diminished economic opportunities, and have triggered violence in affected states or parts of affected states, as well as refugee flows. Such developments have the potential to destabilize neighbouring states.

Mr. Chairman,

The “Declaration on Security” is a ground-breaking document in that it endorses security measures at the bilateral and sub-regional levels as building blocks in the regional security architecture. Member States therefore recognize that cooperation within the Inter-American System does not preclude the adoption of bilateral and sub-regional mechanisms, since it remains within the competence of each State to determine the combination of measures that is best suited to its national interests, bearing in mind, the nature and salience of the threats, and the efficacy of pursuing individual or collective action.

Our common approaches to the new security dilemma envisage measures that are multi-faceted and that involve a variety of actors – both state and non-state. The success of these measures requires cooperation and coordination, across a range of thematic areas and a large number and variety of actors. This constitutes a more complex proposition than that employed in the traditional approach to security, but it behooves us to effectively manage the responsibilities of governments, multi-

lateral institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector, through the formation of partnerships, sharing of experiences and harnessing of our expertise vis-à-vis our legitimate concerns.

Trinidad and Tobago stands ready to participate actively in the follow-up to the mandates contained in the Declaration, within the Committee on Hemispheric Security, Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE), Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), Inter-American Defense Board (IADB), Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and other pertinent fora. We pledge to work with colleague Member States to revitalize and strengthen our hemispheric security institutions since the success of much of our efforts will hinge on the vigour of these institutions and the applicable instruments. The presence of the Member States at this meeting, Mr. Chairman, attests to our political commitment to the contents of the Declaration. However, we wish to point out that the

mobilization of resources aimed at realizing the commitments therein is critical and should be the focus of our efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

We have come a long way since the Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace was held in Chapultepec, Mexico in 1945 to respond to the security needs of the Americas at that time. It is significant that we have once again gathered in Mexico to respond to the security needs of our time. We anticipate that there will be similar opportunities in the future for us to assess the progress attained in the implementation of this Declaration, and to decide whether we need to change direction in the path we are taking to secure our common future.

I thank you.